

peace to South Asia. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to add that this year marks the 50th anniversary of India's independence. Since her birth in 1947, India has hosted free and fair elections through a multiparty political system and has maintained an orderly transfer of power from government to its successor. In light of this achievement, I would urge President Clinton and more Members of this body to visit India this year and to support this momentous occasion.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GOSS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. GOSS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

#### INTRODUCING THE EXPANDED WAR CRIMES ACT OF 1997

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. JONES] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, last week I introduced the Expanded War Crimes Act of 1997. It is a bill which expands the jurisdiction of my original bill, the War Crimes Act of 1996.

Last year I came before this House and told a story of a Navy pilot named Mike Cronin who had spent time as an uninvited guest of the Hanoi Hilton. I spoke of Mr. Cronin's time in Vietnam as an A-6 pilot and of his being shot down and taken prisoner of war and how he spent 6½ years living in a cage. Mike Cronin's story shocked many of you when I told you that upon his return to America he realized that while he and many others had witnessed horrible crimes of war being committed, no justice could be found within the U.S. court system because Congress had not yet enacted implementing legislation of the Geneva Convention. Well, a good number of you must have listened because I am pleased to say that last year Congress finally enacted implementing legislation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Held by the strong support of the State Department, the Defense Department, the American Red Cross, and many others, the War Crimes Act of 1996 finally signed into law legislation originally proposed back in the 83d Congress. The War Crimes Act of 1996 gave the United States the legal authority to try and prosecute the perpetrators of war crimes against American citizens. Additionally those Americans prosecuted now have available all the procedural protections of the American justice systems, quite a victory for America.

The 105th Congress cannot and should not stop there. We must protect all the rights of our men and women defending the interests of our country abroad. It is for that reason that I introduced the Expanded War Crimes Act of 1997. I stand before this body today to encour-

age my colleagues to support this expanded bill. The War Crimes Act of 1997 expands the definition of my original bill to cover not only the grave breaches of the Geneva Convention but also a more general category of war crimes. The bill also includes important articles of the Hague Convention which has long been recognized as an important source of international humanitarian law with respects to means and method of warfare, and finally it includes the international protocol on land mines thereby insuring that the delivery and indiscriminate use of anti-personnel mines to harm civilians would constitute a criminal offense. While the bill is not retroactive, it can ensure that any future victims of war crimes will be given the full protection of the U.S. courts.

My colleagues, it is a bill which would rectify the existing discrepancies between our Nation's intolerance of war crimes and our inability to prosecute war criminals. Please join me as a cosponsor of this important and critical legislation.

#### NINTH ANNUAL CONGRESSIONAL FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES DINNER

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss a situation that is an ongoing problem in this country, and that is our ability to respond to disasters and life-threatening situations. At this very moment we are witnessing nationally the response to major flooding in the Dakotas. Over the past several years we have seen a number of incidents involving loss of life and property damage caused by hurricanes and tornadoes and earthquakes and fires of tremendous magnitudes. These incidents are becoming more complicated. Within the last several hours, there has been an incident uptown in Washington, DC, involving an unknown agent where first responders in this city had to respond in special suits because they were not sure whether or not it involved a chemical or biological incident.

Mr. Speaker, day in and day out, 1.2 million men and women in this country, our domestic defenders, respond to every disaster and emergency situation that this Congress or that this country and our communities face.

On Wednesday of next week, Mr. Speaker, we will in fact host the Ninth Annual Congressional Fire and Emergency Services dinner where 2,000 of the leaders of our domestic defenders across the country from every State will assemble in Washington to again celebrate the work that these brave individuals provide. They are involved in 32,000 organized departments, they are paid and they are volunteers, and they are out there day in and day out as the first responders to America's problems.

Mr. Speaker, I urge our colleagues to join with us in paying tribute to them. Speaker GINGRICH will be our keynote speaker this year. Last year we had AL GORE and we had Bob Dole. The previous 2 years we had President Clinton. Speaker GINGRICH will in fact address these individuals and reinforce the commitment of this Congress to work on their priorities.

During Wednesday afternoon, Mr. Speaker, starting at 12:45 the Marine Corps Chemical and Biological Incident Response Team, which was created by Congress over the past year, will respond to a simulated incident involving a chemical or biological agent in the Rayburn Park. Two hundred forty marines will arrive from Camp LeJeune, and they will demonstrate our country's ability to respond to a life-threatening situation involving an unknown agent.

But, Mr. Speaker, even though our marines are the finest in the world and this team is the finest in the world today, the first responders who have to go on these scenes in the first few minutes are those most at risk, and they are the ones that we have to make sure have the proper protection, the proper training, and the resources to meet these threats until reinforcements can in fact be provided by our military and by the marine response unit.

On Wednesday during the day and the evening, we will focus on this group of people and we will discuss the key priorities that we in this Congress can focus on to assist these 1.2 million men and women to better serve their communities.

Mr. Speaker, I urge all of our colleagues to join with us both during the day at the information sessions, meetings that will be held in Member offices, and finally on Wednesday evening to the Washington Hilton to attend the ninth annual dinner.

Mr. Speaker, there are no braver group of people in this country who respond to every type of disaster that we face as a nation, and many of them are not being paid to respond, and it is appropriate that we in the Congress provide the appropriate resources and support to allow them to continue to serve America.

#### INTRODUCTION OF THE VOTER ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION ACT—H.R. 1428

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California [Mr. HORN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HORN. Mr. Speaker, today I and 16 other colleagues are introducing the Voter Eligibility Verification Act, H.R. 1428. I think most American citizens would say that the very hallmark of citizenship is the right to cast one's vote and to have it counted. But in America we have increasingly situations where people who are not American citizens are voting, and local registrars and State chief election officers